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News Release

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The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is announcing that the name of the new Chicago-area national cemetery is the "Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery." The cemetery is located within the former Joliet Army Ammunition Plant and is approximately 55 miles from downtown Chicago.

More than one million veterans in Northeastern Illinois, Northwestern Indiana, and Southern Wisconsin live within 75 miles of the site. Presently, the nearest VA national cemeteries are in Danville, 120 miles south of Chicago; and Rock Island, 150 miles west of Chicago. The new cemetery is projected to open in the summer of 1999.

"VA is extremely pleased that this region will finally have the service of a national cemetery. We are committed to developing this important national shrine in a manner that will do honor to the legacy of Abraham Lincoln, who lived, worked, and is buried in Illinois. Among Lincoln's many historic achievements is the establishment of the National Cemetery System. In addition, the new name has the overwhelming support of local civic and political leaders and veterans service organizations," said Roger R. Rapp, acting director of VA's National Cemetery System.

The 982-acre cemetery site is adjacent to the planned location of the Midewin National Tall Grass Prairie park. The 125-acre development scheduled for the first phase of the project will provide approximately 25,000 gravesites, including 2,000 pre-placed lawn crypts; 3,000 columbarium niches; and 2,300 garden niches.

Veterans with discharges other than dishonorable, their spouses and dependent children are eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery. VA also provides grave markers or headstones for the unmarked graves of eligible veterans even if they are not buried in a national cemetery. VA does not reserve space in national cemeteries prior to the time of need. Information on VA burial benefits is available from national cemetery offices and VA regional offices.

For more information, call 1-800-827-1000, or visit the VA homepage on the world wide web at <http://www.va.gov> or the National Cemetery System homepage at <http://www.va.gov/cemetery>.